

## Working Group on Supportive Housing for Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

The working group shall: **Determine the key characteristics of individuals and families experiencing long-term homelessness for whom affordable housing with links to support services is needed.** Laws of Minnesota, 2003, Chapter 128, Article 15, section 9.

#### BACKGROUND DEFINITIONS OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

HUD, HHS and VA Define a Chronically Homeless Person as: An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. *Federal Register*, Vol. 68, No. 80, Friday, April 25, 2003, Notices, 21598.

The Wilder Research Center Survey Defines Chronic Homelessness as: Current episode of homelessness that has lasted more than 12 months. *Homeless Adults and Children in Minnesota*, p. 10, Wilder Research Center, June 2001.

#### SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

##### 2001 Wilder Survey Main Characteristics for Homeless Adults Fitting the Chronic Criteria:

- Report alcohol use (50%) and/or have been admitted to a detox center (43%)
- Report persistent mental health problems (32%) and/or have lived in a facility for persons with mental health problems (22%)
- Received care in an emergency room in last six months (41%)

Persons who were homeless for more than one year remained steady at about 30% in 1991, 1994, and 1997, and then increased to 36% in 2000.

When asked their total income, only 25% of all persons surveyed (including persons fitting crisis, episodic and chronic homelessness criteria) reported an income of over \$800.

##### Significant Risk Factors of the Hennepin County 200 Families:

- Domestic violence (95%)
- Criminal history (89%)
- Chemical dependency (85%)
- Mental health (70%)
- Cognitive limitations
- 63.5% use cash grants or Food Stamps

*Hennepin County 200 Families Phase 2 Report, 1999. (In Phase 1, 1997, Hennepin County identified the 200 families that utilized more than \$29 million in human services funding per year for 1996 and 1997. In 1999, using the identified families, Hennepin County continued the work of examining multi-problem families to describe an integrated social service delivery system that would be more cost effective and produce better outcomes for the most expensive social service families in Hennepin County. Of these families, 53% experienced homelessness.)*

#### HHS Characteristics Associated with Chronic Homelessness:

- Disability - serious health conditions, substance abuse, and psychiatric illnesses
- Heavy Use of Services - 10% of the users of homeless shelters consume 50% of the days
- Engagement with Treatments - past experiences with mainstream services
- Multiple Problems - complex services needs
- Fragmented Systems - services not flexible or comprehensive

*Ending Chronic Homelessness, Strategies for Action, Department of Health and Human Services, Report from the Secretary's Work Group on Ending Chronic Homelessness, March 2003.*

#### Main Characteristics of Chronic Homeless, Fannie Mae Foundation, Housing Facts and Findings:

- Severely mentally ill
- Disabled by behavioral and physical health conditions
- Extensive user of other acute care service systems
- Repeatedly homeless for a year or more

*Strategies and Collaborations Target Homelessness by Dennis Culhane, Fannie Mae Foundation Housing Facts & Findings, Volume 4, Issue 5, 2003. Culhane is a University of Pennsylvania Associate Professor of Welfare Policy and Research Associate Professor of Psychology.*

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

An individual or adult family member with:

Mental illness,  
Chemical dependency, or  
Dual diagnosis of mental illness and chemical dependency;  
and  
who has either been homeless continuously for a year or more,  
or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years,  
excluding periods of incarceration or institutionalization.

Plus: Domestic Abuse and Neglect, Criminal History, Cognitive Limitations  
and Chronic Health Conditions (including HIV/AIDS)